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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR AIT/W, EAP/TC, INR/EAP

FROM AIT KAOHSIUNG BRANCH OFFICE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Anti-Chen Protest Motorcade in Kaohsiung, Pingtung, and Taitung - Smoother Sailing

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On the evening of October 3, the anti-President Chen motorcade led by Shih Ming-teh passed through Kaohsiung City without stopping and held a rally in Pingtung City. Two thousand local people joined the event, which ended peacefully without encountering any protest from pro-Chen supporters. Police in Taitung anticipate no problems with the anti-Chen rally there. End Summary.

Kaohsiung City and County

¶2. (SBU) Lacking a permit to rally in Kaohsiung City, the anti-Chen motorcade passed through Kaohsiung City peacefully without stopping. Hundreds of local anti-Chen supporters, mobilized by City Council candidate Wang Ling-chiao (PFP), welcomed the anti-Chen motorcade in front of the Kaohsiung City Government building. Across the road, stood hundreds of pro-Chen supporters, some of whom were mobilized by an independent City council candidate Huang Wan-hung. The two groups of people were separated by police. The anti-Chen motorcade, escorted by Kaohsiung police cars, passed safely and without incident through the city, though there were several altercations and arrests involving pro-Chen counter-protesters.

¶3. (SBU) In the remainder of its travel through Kaohsiung County, the anti-Chen motorcade was welcomed by few people as it headed to Pingtung without stopping. A rumor that Shih Ming-teh might stop at a certain point in the route near the scenic Chengqing Lake attracted a gathering of people. A minor confrontation and pushing match broke out between small groups of anti-Chen and pro-Chen supporters, but was broken up quickly by police who arrived after the confrontation began.

Pingtung County

¶4. (SBU) With permission from Pingtung County Magistrate Chao Chi-hung (DPP), an anti-Chen rally was held October 3 in Pingtung Stadium, which has a capacity of 10,000. The application for the permit came from KMT Legislator Liao Wan-ju. AIT/K staff estimated some 2,000 local people participated in the rally and at least 1,000 police were deployed around the site. United Daily News (October 4 Kaohsiung edition) put the number of participants at 1,500. There were no obvious pro-DPP supporters at the site, although a few senior citizens were standing on the other side of the police lines.

In his speech at the Pingtung rally, former DPP chairman Shih

Ming-teh called the Anti-Chen Action the "most glorious moment" of his life and criticized acting Kaohsiung Mayor Yeh Chu-lan for her close ties to what Shih characterized as a corrupt DPP government.

¶5. (SBU) Two police officers in Pingtung told AIT/K staff that permission for the anti-Chen rally had been properly granted according to the law and that having a legal rally made it easier for them to do their jobs. When asked whether the police around Taiwan tend to support the pan-Blue camp, one officer indicated that historically pan-Blue supporters are less violent during demonstrations compared with the pan-Green camp, making them easier to deal with. One police officer observed that the anti-Chen protestors are very easy to handle as long as pro-Chen supporters do not come out to confront rally participants. After the rally, the anti-Chen protestors stayed overnight in Kenting, a beach resort town in the southern portion of Pingtung County, with local police providing them with protection.

¶6. (SBU) Independent Pingtung Legislator Tsai Hao also joined the Pingtung rally. Local people at the rally said that Tsai had offered to host a dinner for the anti-Chen group, but was refused because Shih Ming-teh did not want to be associated with any political faction. At the rally, a much relieved participant in the Shih motorcade told AIT/K staff that he believed the tensest moments of the tour were over. The staff member said the group had rightly sensed danger earlier upon their arrival in Chiayi City and County, where they had been attacked with bricks and rocks.

¶7. (SBU) While the southern tour itself is nearing an end, there will be some political aftereffects. As reported by United Daily News on October 4, the anti-Chen action headquarters has pressed charges of negligence and interference with freedom of expression against Tainan County Magistrate Su Huan-Chih and Tainan County

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Police Bureau Commissioner Huang Fu-sheng for blocking the county's main road to stop the anti-Chen motorcade from entering Tainan County.

Taitung County

¶8. (SBU) In conversations with AIT/K, Taitung police reported that they are not worried about the possibility of conflict when Shih's motorcade arrives. Taitung police took a proactive stance by making advance personal visits or phone calls earlier this week to known troublemakers, encouraging them to stay home and take no action against the anti-Chen motorcade or rally participants. The local DPP office also took a proactive role in preventing any conflict by issuing a press release telling DPP members to avoid the rally site and prohibiting party members from mobilizing DPP supporters to visit the rally. So far, Taitung officials estimate that no more than 2,000 persons will attend the rally, for which a permit was issued readily by the ruling KMT Magistrate Kuang Li-zhen.

Comment

¶9. (SBU) Thanks to active involvement and sharing of resources by police throughout southern Taiwan, possible confrontations were anticipated and dealt with quickly. Incidents in Chiayi showed that DPP support there still has some passion. The general lack of interest in the anti-Chen motorcade following the Chiayi and Tainan legs suggests that the DPP administration's scandals over the past year may have reduced the willingness of formerly active DPP supporters to come out to support the DPP cause. DPP supporters who did come out in southern Taiwan by-and-large appeared to be senior citizens mobilized to make an appearance on behalf of local DPP party offices. By contrast, most of the local anti-Chen supporters who came to greet the motorcade or join rallies were younger or middle-aged persons, suggesting that the DPP may be losing support from the southern swing vote due to corruption allegations.

THIELE

WANG